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News Release



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Norton Announces Funding for Wetlands Projects, Including Lake County Basin Project

Interior Secretary Gale Norton announced today a major federal grant to help restore nearly 5,000 acres in Oregon's Lake County. The \$1 million North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant is part of the more than \$27 million approved by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission for wetland habitat conservation in the United States and Canada to benefit migratory birds and other wildlife.

Ducks Unlimited and 13 partners will receive \$1 million and contribute up to \$1.7 million for the Lake County Closed Basin Project to conserve more than 5,000 acres of wetlands in Oregon.

The Commission's action will provide funding to states and other partners through the NAWCA to conserve habitat for migratory birds. The Commission used money from the sale of the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, the Duck Stamp, to purchase key tracts of land for the Service's National Wildlife Refuge System in six states.

"We are working to make good on President Bush's goal of restoring, enhancing and protecting 3 million acres of wetlands over the next five years," said Secretary Gale Norton, who chairs the Commission. "With this round of NAWCA proposals, we are set to restore nearly 22,000 acres, enhance nearly 89,000 acres, and protect more than 217,000 acres of wetlands around the nation."

"President Bush's support for wetlands conservation was clearly evident when he approved the reauthorization of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, renewing that commitment and supporting increased funding through this outstanding public-private partnership program. Wetlands provide excellent habitat for wildlife, and provide millions of Americans with a broad range of outdoor recreational opportunities."

Working with Partners to Conserve Wetlands

The NAWCA Standard Grants Program will fund 22 projects in 13 states for more than \$20.5 million to protect or restore more than 1.1 million acres of wetlands and associated upland habitats. Project partners will contribute up to \$150 million.

Since 1990, more than 2,000 partners have been involved in more than 1,000 projects made possible through the Standard Grant Program. Canadian, Mexican and U.S. partners focus on protecting, restoring, and enhancing wetland habitat. Project partners must minimally match the grant request at a one-to-one

ratio. More than \$600 million has been invested through the Act and total partner contributions exceed \$1.7 billion. More than 22 million acres of wetlands and associated uplands have been affected across the continent.

The Commission also approved more than \$6.4 million in funding for 13 projects in Canada. Partners there are adding more than \$15.4 million to conserve 98,000 acres of wetlands.

"Since many of North America's waterfowl species are dependent on breeding habitat in Canada it is important that we use our NAWCA funds to conserve habitat there as well," said Service Director Steve Williams. "All of this work with partners will help us continue to improve habitat conditions and promote solution oriented conservation of migratory birds and other wildlife for future generations."

Funding for this program comes from Congressional appropriations, funds collected from fines, penalties, and forfeitures under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, interest accrued to the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act, and from excise taxes paid on small engine fuels through Wallop-Breaux Amendments to the Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act.

The Commission meets three times a year to approve funding proposals. Permanent Commission members are Interior Secretary Norton, Senators Thad Cochran and John Breaux; Representatives John Dingell and Curt Weldon; Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman; and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Mike Leavitt.

At the same time, the Commission also approved the acquisition of nearly 16,000 acres of important migratory bird habitat to be added to units in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

For more information on NAWCA and to see summaries of funded projects, please see

<http://birdhabitat.fws.gov/NAWCA/projects/USprojects/standardgrants090804/USstandardgrantsprojects.ht>

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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 544 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.